

Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa

21 July 2019

Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

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Kia ora Ms Ardern,

Renewed call for the government to cancel \$9 million military robot purchase from Israel

On 23 May we wrote to the Minister of Defence Ron Mark asking him to intervene and cancel a proposed purchase of military equipment from Israel. We never received a response to that letter nor to several other communications with that Minister's office.

We are now renewing this call for you, on behalf of the government, to cancel this proposed purchase.

This renewed call is being made in response to information revealed under the Official Information Act which shows the cost of the military purchase from Israel is \$9 million and the deal is to go ahead despite your government's procurement rules (Rule 44 – "Reasons to exclude a supplier") indicating that you may exclude a supplier on the basis of –

"human rights violations by the supplier or in the supplier's supply chain"

The Roboteam company, from which the proposed arms purchase is to be made, is an integral part of the Israeli Defence Force and has numerous contracts to provide military equipment to support the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and the siege of Gaza.

The founders of Roboteam, Yossi Wolf and Elad Levy, both served as officers in the Israeli Air Force Special Forces before establishing Roboteam in 2009. They developed and supplied a robot to the IDF that was actively used in Operation Protective Edge, the sustained Israeli attack on the Gaza strip in 2014 involving numerous human rights abuses and war crimes committed against the civilian Palestinian population of Gaza. In these attacks 1,492 civilians were killed, 551 children and 299 women)

Recent [media reports](#) indicate the Roboteam products to be purchased by our Defence Force have been trialled by the Israeli Defence Force in its occupation of the West Bank and on the Gaza "border". The tests were termed a "success".

The IDF is renowned for its testing of military equipment on the civilian population of occupied Palestine. It is also renowned for its brutality – for example the murder and maiming of Palestinian children – 16 killed so far this year and its widely condemned detention without trial of Palestinian children and minors. In April this year for example 205 Palestinian minors were being held in Israeli prisons, without trial, as security detainees and prisoners.

More broadly the Israeli Defence Force has been notorious for its abuses of human rights over many decades.

In terms of your government policy we therefore urge you to refuse to engage with Roboteam and cancel this proposed purchase which is directly linked to violations of human rights in Israel, Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

If the murder, maiming or detention without trial of Palestinian children do not constitute human rights violations, then we would appreciate you indicating what level of human rights abuse would trigger the government to implement Rule 44.

In addition to this human rights argument, Palestinian groups have repeatedly called for BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against the Israeli regime which across the world is known as an apartheid state. New Zealand gave support to the struggle against apartheid South Africa through boycotts and we should do the same to help isolate apartheid Israel until it complies with its international legal obligations.

We urge you NOT to pass this letter on to the 'dead-end' which is the Minister of Defence's Office and respond yourself on behalf of the government.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Na,

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